



The Historic Franklin School Building

**925 13th Street, NW
Washington D.C.**

Request for Expressions of Interest

Issued

August 5, 2002

by

Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development
1350 Pennsylvania Ave, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20004

Building Visit: August 19, 2002 10am –12pm

Responses Due: September 6, 2002 4pm

Historic Franklin School Building

Request for Expressions of Interest

I. Introduction

The Government of the District of Columbia invites all interested parties to respond to this Request for Expression of Interest (RFEI) for the renovation and reuse of the historic Franklin School Building located at 13th & K Streets, NW (The Property) on Franklin Square in the heart of Downtown Washington. The building was constructed in 1869 and is part of the District's heritage. The Franklin School is a National Historic Landmark, was the first flagship public school in the city, received several international design awards, and served as a location for experiments by Alexander Graham Bell. The building has been vacant since 1989.

The Williams Administration wants to see the Franklin School reused to help fulfill its vision of a vibrant and active downtown. The building was identified in the District's *Downtown Action Agenda* (see below) as a key opportunity site. In March of 2000, the Financial Control Board transferred ownership of the building from the DC Public Schools to the Government of the District of Columbia. Over the past several months, the District commissioned several studies in preparation for the school's disposition. The studies can be found at www.planning.dc.gov.

Purpose

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development is issuing this RFEI to determine legitimate market interest for one of the District's finest historic structures. The District will use the responses to make a final determination of use in preparation for a competitive disposition of the property. The District intends to draft and submit a Request for Proposals to the Council of the District of Columbia in September 2002.

Previous analyses demonstrated that the Franklin School has significant value to the city when it is reused as residential or commercial office space. The District is interested in learning about the marketability and viability of reusing the Franklin School by cultural and higher educational institutions. For this reason, the District requests expressions of interest from cultural institutions, higher education institutions or similar users.

This RFEI does not commit the District to select any development team or to negotiate a contract.

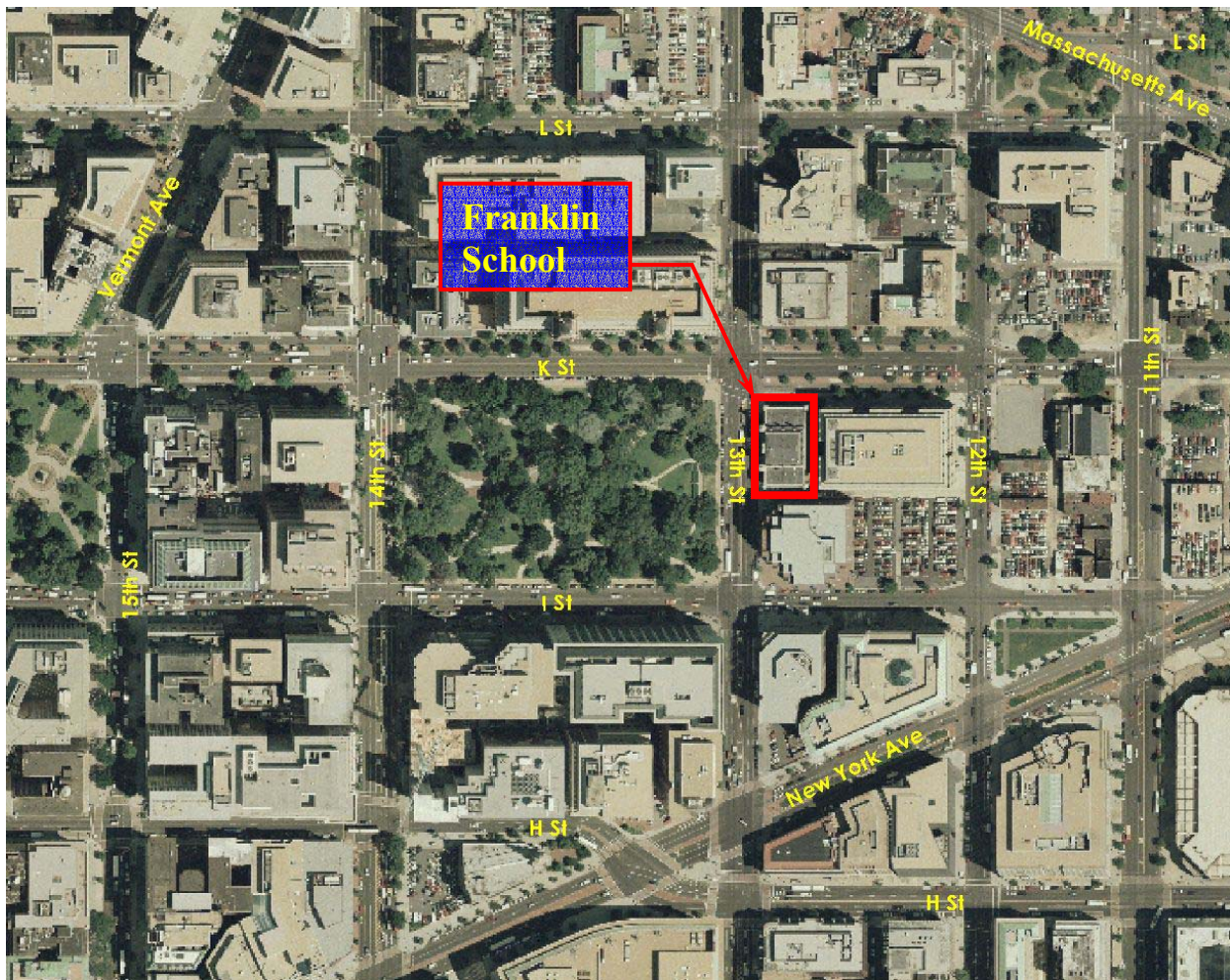
II. Downtown Context

Downtown Action Agenda

Released in November 2000 by Mayor Williams, the Downtown Action Agenda outlined the steps necessary to fulfill the District's vision for downtown that was first articulated in 1982. Many of the steps such as Zoning and Tax Incentives for Housing, an Area-Wide TIF District, and the Existing Convention Center Redevelopment are now completed or well under way. Results include 1,500 units of housing under construction, with several thousand more in

predevelopment, TIF financing of the recently opened Spy Museum, and two new live theatre stages under construction.

One of the main strategies of the *Downtown Action Agenda* is to capitalize on key publicly owned sites. While the *Agenda* identifies the Franklin School as an opportunity to support cultural institutions, the District recognizes that there may be many interested users such as institutions of higher learning, flagship office and other destinations of distinction that could be compatible with the overall intent of the *Downtown Action Agenda*.



Aerial view of Franklin Square.

Downtown & Franklin Square

Franklin Square is the largest of L'Enfant's downtown parks. Located on K Street, one of downtown's major axes, its excellent tree canopy and fountain creates an inviting environment for pedestrians.

The surrounding streets are primarily dominated by office buildings, but also offer nearby metro access at McPherson Square and Metro Center stations, six hotels, and the National Museum for Women in the Arts. Private development either recently completed or under construction,

includes 984 hotel rooms, 425 planned residential units and 900,000 square feet of office. In addition several large-scale public/private redevelopment efforts are underway nearby including:

- The New Convention center – 2.3 million square feet of convention space located at Mt Vernon Square three blocks away;
- Existing Convention Center Redevelopment – an RFQ for a Master Developer is being issued for residential retail and civic space development three blocks away on New York Avenue; and
- Gallery Place at Chinatown – a large TIF financed, mixed-use development for housing, retail and entertainment currently under construction.

While the square is active during the daytime, activity during the evening drops off dramatically. For this reason, uses that will create evening pedestrian activity are strongly encouraged.

III. Site Building Profile

The Property is identified by Tax Lot 808 of Square 285 and is listed at 14,938 square feet in size. The building's gross square footage is roughly 51,000 square feet, however due to the nature of the building's interior useable square footage is considerably less and will depend on a particular user's program. The analysis by the District's consultant (study available online at www.planning.dc.gov) determined that there is approximately 30,000 useable square feet of space. A rear yard on the east side of the building is roughly 4,736 square feet in size.

Because the District owns the building, it is technically unzoned. However the surrounding area is DD/C-4, which is defined as high-density business and retail, and includes a mix of employment, retail, office, cultural and entertainment centers. The zoning permits by right development of 10.0 FAR with heights of up to 130 feet. The historic status of the building essentially limits reuse to the building's existing envelope. Need to use some of the rear yard to provide modern core facilities is expected.

Incentives such as Transferable Development Rights exist for preservation of historic buildings and preferred uses. Further information can be found in Chapter 17 of the District's Zoning Code.

The exterior of the building is designated historic under the District's Historic Preservation Act and an interior designation application has been filed. This requires the District's Historic Preservation Review Board to approve all changes made to the building. The building is also a National Historic Landmark (one of four owned by the District). Maintenance of the building's historic status is considered vital.

IV. Preliminary Disposition Requirements

Conclusions made from the studies completed include several goals and development requirements that must be fulfilled. These include:

- Return building to active use – The current vacant status of this prominent building has a negative impact on Franklin Square.
- Maintain historic status – potential reuses should not affect the building’s National Landmark status and comply with all local requirements.
- Pedestrian activity – increased pedestrian traffic to Franklin Square throughout the day and evening would be beneficial to the surrounding retail.
- Long-term control and revenue - The District is interested in maintaining long-term control via a ground lease and generating fiscal revenue to the District.
- Public access – Due to the civic nature of the building’s past, the District is interested in retaining some public access. Such access could include public meetings in the great hall or a ground floor visitor space.

To make a final determination of preferred use for the competitive disposition, the District will place great weight on the viability of the reuses. Given the inherent value of the building, direct District subsidy is discouraged.

V. Submission Requirements

Respondents to this RFEI are requested to submit a Letter of Interest of no more than five pages that contains the following information:

- Description of Uses and Tenants. Describe the proposed uses or users, such as the planned activities, the organization, its history, mission & goals, and other relevant information. Describe how the uses will help the District meet the “Preliminary Disposition Requirement” described above.
- Description of Development Team. Describe the Development Team, its qualifications and experience with similar historic buildings. Provide the development team’s approach to fulfilling the reuse of the property including level of historic preservation and type of financing.
- Description of Public & Economic Benefits. Provide a narrative of the potential public benefits created by this reuse.

All questions regarding this RFEI should be referred to Scott Barkan of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development at (202) 727-6365 or “scott.barkan@dc.gov.” Respondents shall submit an original plus five (5) copies of the proposal by 4:00 PM on September 6th, 2002 to:

Arthur Rodgers
Office of Planning
801 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 4000
Washington, DC 20002